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EAST EUROPE BRANCH NOTE

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EAST GERMANY

GDR Sentences West Berliners

An East German court has sentenced two West Berliners to heavy terms of imprisonment for attempting to help East German citizens flee to the West. The Potsdam court sentenced defendant Oliver Mierendorf to a rarely imposed fifteen year maximum provided by the law for "anti-state human trafficking." His codefendant, Wolfgang Eggert, was given a 12-year sentence.

The action came just one day after West German President Scheel signed the controversial bill authorizing the opening of a Federal Environmental Agency (FEA) in West Berlin. The two events are probably unrelated, but some West Germans may view the sentencing as retaliation by Pankow. At minimum, the East German action threatens to revive the ex-filtration controversy that has periodically troubled inter-German relations. It also could add fuel to the new Berlin controversy that is already building over the FEA issue.

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